

**Baton Rouge, LA – The Advocate**  
**Auditors approve Jetson**  
**Facility passes standards, recommended for accreditation**

Ted Griggs

Advocate business writer

Three years after the Legislature voted to close the Jetson Center for Youth in a decision that was later reversed, the juvenile prison has been recommended for accreditation by the American Correctional Association.

The association is the oldest and largest correctional association in the world, and its standards are used as a management tool by more than 1,500 correctional agencies nationwide.

The association audit found the facility complied with each one of 367 standards, according to the state Office of Juvenile Justice. Those standards include treatment, safety, and medical and mental health care.

Ellyn Toney, chief operations officer at the Office of Juvenile Justice, said the auditors were at Jetson for 2 1/2 days, examining policies and procedures for everything from how the facility governs the use of tools and chemicals to screening for communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis, to the use of force on juveniles.

The auditors also interviewed Jetson's staff, from different shifts, and juveniles incarcerated there, Toney said.

"They pretty much looked at every aspect of operation," Toney said.

Jetson has been a source of controversy for years.

The Legislature passed a bill calling for Jetson's closure in 2009, and Gov. Bobby Jindal signed the bill into law. However, a few months later Jindal administration officials announced the prison would remain open, with fewer juvenile prisoners, and a different philosophy.

In a news release Friday, Juvenile Justice Deputy Secretary Mary Livers said the facility has come a long way in a short time.

Meeting the standards for accreditation doesn't happen overnight, she said. Livers credited Jetson director Daron Brown and the staff for their work to reform the facility.

The American Correctional Association's Commission on Accreditation for Corrections will make the final determination of whether Jetson is accredited. Jetson was last re-accredited in 2003.

The prison had been plagued by violence. In the mid-1990s, rapes and beatings at the facility led to eight years of litigation and federal court oversight, which ended in 2006. But two years later, the same problems resurfaced.

Dana Kaplan, director of the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, said the accreditation is a positive sign. Kaplan's nonprofit group acts as a watchdog over the Office of Juvenile Justice.

"I think we appreciate each sign of progress in the OJJ facilities," Kaplan said. "We certainly know that that doesn't mean there aren't great strides to still be made statewide."

However, Kaplan said she is hopeful the state will continue to work toward establishing smaller, regional juvenile facilities and making sure that all children receive effective services while at those facilities.